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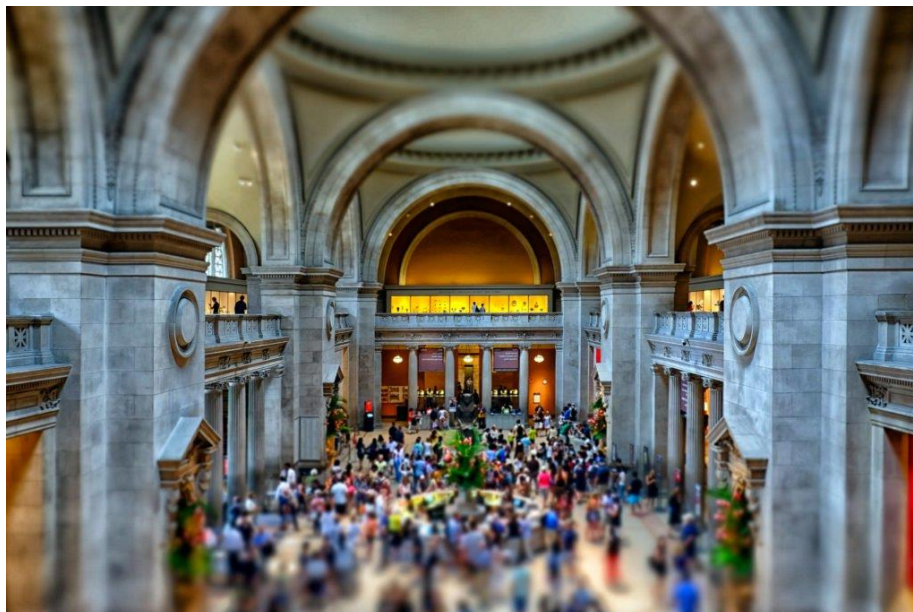
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With ‘Open Access,’ the Met Museum’s Digital Operation Has a Bona Fide Hit on its Hands

The museum's photo-sharing initiative has had a major impact on Wikimedia and Creative Commons.

Sarah Cascone, August 10, 2017



The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Photo by Timothy Neesam, via Flickr.

In February, New York's [Metropolitan Museum of Art](#) announced that it was [pursuing a new Open Access policy](#)—releasing high-resolution imagery of all its public-domain works (over 375,000 in total). Six months later, the new initiative has had a major impact on sites such as Wikimedia and Creative Commons, and the museum is continuing to branch out. This week, the Met announced a partnership with Google's data analytics platform, BigQuery.

“During what is just the dawn of this new initiative, the responses so far have been incredible,” wrote Loic Tallon, the museum's chief digital officer, in a [blog post](#).

The numbers speak for themselves. According to Tallon, the Met's website has seen a 64 percent increase in image downloads since Open Access was implemented, as well as a 17 percent bump in traffic to the online collection. Users who download photographs are now spending five times as long on the site.

But the biggest beneficiary of the photo-sharing program might be Wikimedia. Over 90 percent of the Open Access photographs have been uploaded to Wikimedia Commons. And since February, there has been a 500 percent increase in new Wikipedia articles featuring photographs from the Met collection, now up to 6,598. The museum recently held its first [Wikimedia Edit-a-thon](#) and [Met Open Access Art Challenge](#), adding articles like [Hiawatha and Minnehaha](#), about a pair of busts in the Met collection by pioneering 19th-century African-American sculptor Edmonia Lewis.

The impact of Open Access has also been massive at Creative Commons, where a full two-thirds of searches are now about the museum's collection—and van Gogh,

Monet, Botticelli, and Picasso are just as popular search terms as "cat" and "dog."



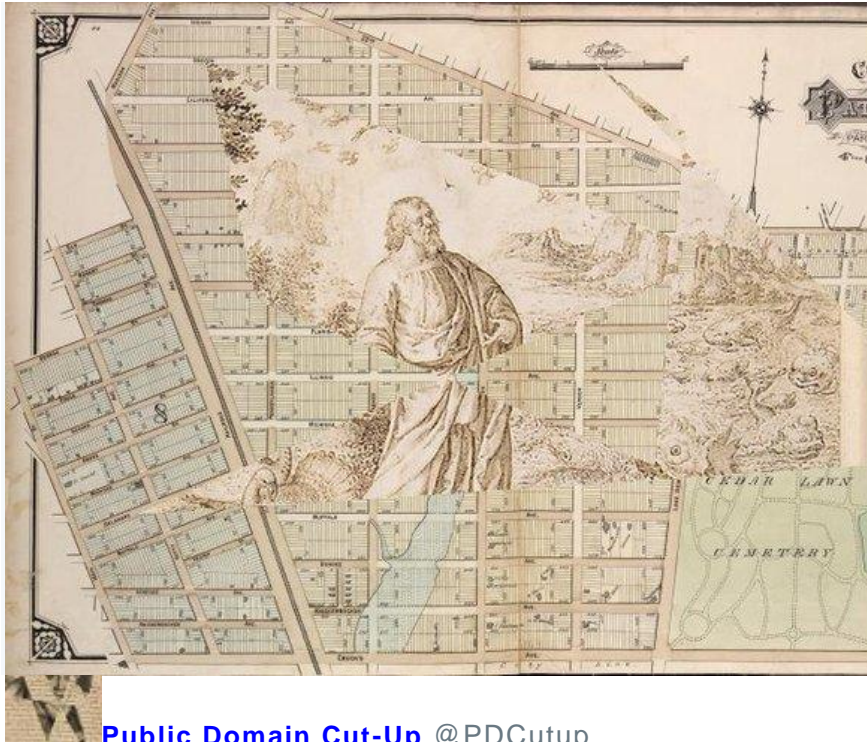


[Face-Swap The Met](#) @artfaceswaps
Artist: Giacomo Ceruti
Date: 1740s
Medium: Oil on canvas
[6:51 PM - Feb 14, 2017](#)

The initiative has piqued the Internet's interest, too. There are now two hilarious Twitter feeds dedicated to it—[Face-Swap the Met](#) and [Public Domain Cut-Up](#) (a bot that creates collages using the Met's Creative Commons images and those of the New York Public Library). The Open Access collection has also generated serious, data-driven analysis from [FiveThirtyEight](#), which breaks down the museum's holdings by the year that objects were made, the year they were acquired, and their country of origin.

“It’s inspiring to see how creative people are when you make a collection like the Met’s accessible for them to use, share and remix without restriction,” added Tallon in an email to artnet News.

All art lovers are welcome to use the Met’s Open Access photographs—which cover 5,000 years of world culture—for both scholarly and commercial purposes. The high-resolution images are 4,000 pixels wide and are held under a Creative Commons Zero (CC0) designation.



Public Domain Cut-Up @PDCutup
NYPL: City of Paterson. Part of the 4th
and.. <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/0cf1b120-c5ed-012f-7cd0-58d385a7bc34> ...
MET: The Creation of the Fish and the
Birds <http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/337930> ...
[5:27 AM - Aug 9, 2017](#)

For the next step, on August 7, Google announced that the Met collection would be added to BigQuery, the first museum data set to join the analytics platform, Tallon wrote in his blog post.

“They’re making it possible to do automated image recognition analyses across all 385,000 public-domain images,” said Tallon in his email. “As these technologies improve, and particularly with the growth of artificial intelligence, I expect we’ll soon be seeing things like complex pattern identifications focused on the aesthetic qualities of the collection, or computer generated predictions about an artist’s next work. It’s an exciting moment to have the data out there!”